

HASSLE1

The Paper of the Alliance
of Unwaged Organisations

SPRING 89

Free

ACTIVELY AVOIDING HARASSMENT

NEW RULES BEING
INTRODUCED INTO
BENEFIT OFFICES WILL
MEAN MORE
INTERVIEWS, MORE
FORMS, MORE
PRESSURE.

ACTIVELY SEEKING WORK

Claimant advisers will be able to insist that you PROVE each week what you are doing to find work. This will be extremely difficult, as many employers do not acknowledge job applications. This is also contrary to the normal principles of British justice - innocent until proven guilty.

200 more claimant advisers are being employed to do this.

UNSUITABLE WORK

After a certain period, you will no longer be able to specify what sort of work you are looking for. Claimant advisers will attempt to force people into ANY low paid work available.

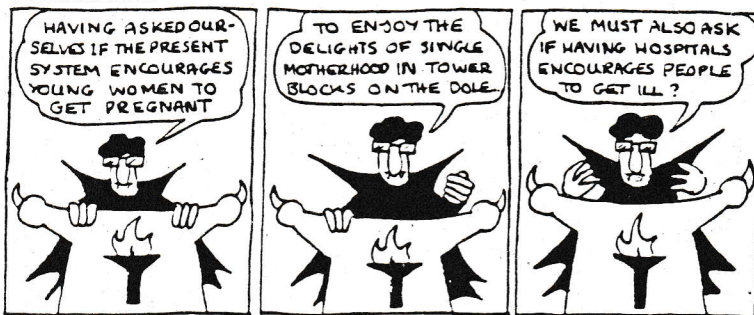
NEW CLIENT ADVISERS

Everyone making a new claim will get a 40 minute interview before any claim forms are even issued. Already, people are being forced onto ET BEFORE THEY EVEN CLAIM. Don't let this happen to you.

RESTART FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEWS

Using the yellow RESTART form - RR6 - for reference, RESTART will hold more frequent interviews, perhaps as often as every one or two months.

DOLE DRUMS



The Government's aim with these new measures is to further reduce unemployment figures by pushing people off benefit and to further establish the principle of WORKING for benefit, or at near benefit level wages.

OUR ADVICE IS SIMPLE. DON'T BE A PART OF THIS. DON'T BE PUSHED AROUND.

Here are a few hints.

PREPARE

Keep rejection slips from jobs you've applied for. Keep a list of workplaces you've phoned.

SCHEMES ARE VOLUNTARY

All Government schemes, except YTS and the actual Restart and claimant adviser interviews, are VOLUNTARY. Ask staff to re-assure you of this.

ADVICE AND SUPPORT. If you feel pressured GET ADVICE from your local claimants union, unemployed centre, or advice shop. TAKE A FRIEND or representative with you to any UBO or DSS interview. Even if all they do is take notes, they will still help prevent you from being intimidated.

IF YOUR BENEFIT IS
SUSPENDED, MAKE A
FRESH CLAIM
IMMEDIATELY, APPEAL
AGAINST THE
SUSPENSION, AND SEEK
ADVICE IMMEDIATELY.

KNACRO knackered

The largest ET agent in the voluntary sector is NACRO - The National Association for the Care and Rehabilitation of Offenders. NACRO want up to 20,000 ET people, but so far they've got less than 2,000.

NACRO management are sacking staff who oppose ET - this from an organisation that's supposed to help people.

The ET crisis within NACRO is causing all sorts of financial and administrative problems, let alone giving the organisation an extremely bad image.

Feb 13-25 saw a fortnight of actions against NACRO up and down the country from campaigners against Workfare. This action against NACRO will go on. What are NACRO doing in YOUR area?

Contact the Campaign Against Workfare about your local NACRO schemes and what to do about it.



THE WORKERS WITHOUT JOBS AREN'T DOING THE JOBS WITHOUT WAGES

ET is a flop. Unemployed people don't want to know. Of the government's target figure of 600,000, only 106,000 have actually started. And over half of these could well have dropped out.

One Age Concern site has a 100% drop-out rate.

On the Wirral a scheme manager made off with all the money.

Private industry doesn't seem to keen on letting conscript labour loose in their 'shops', offices and factories

This article is taken largely from the Campaign Against Workfare Bulletin available from the TGWU CP Stewards Combine, TGWU 1 Crescent, Salford, M5 4PR.

Issue One contains the Campaigns Programme for Action. In their own Words - READ IT, SUPPORT IT, AND GET INVOLVED.

ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS!

ET JOBS WITHOUT WAGES

HERE'S A LIST OF CAMPAIGN AGAINST WORKFARE CONTACTS. The groups vary considerably, except for one thing - OPPOSITION TO ET.

Contact your nearest group, or set up your own. It's not difficult.

Alliance of Unwaged Organisations c/o Tavistock Claimants Union, Kingdon House, Pym St, Devon.

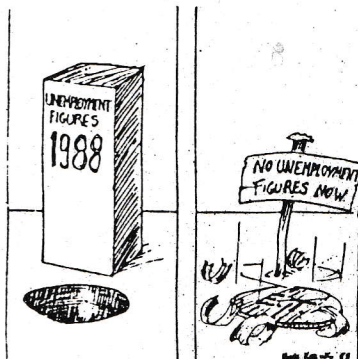
Cardiff Campaign Against Workfare, 2 Tyn-Y-Coed, Place Roath, Cardiff.

Edinburgh Campaign Against Workfare c/o Unemployed Workers Centre, 2 Cranston St, Edinburgh

Federation of Claimants Unions, c/o Rights Shop, 296 Bethnal Green Rd, London E2

Federation of Unemployed Centres, c/o MUTURC, 24 Hardman St Liverpool.

Leeds Action Against Workfare, All Hallows Community Centre, Regent Terrace, Leeds



Many schemes are 'ghost schemes' where people do almost nothing all day.

What's happening in your area? Tell the Campaign Against Workfare. Join the Campaign Against Workfare.

South West ET Workers Group (SWET) P.O. Box 105, Plymouth

TGWU CP Stewards Combine, TGWU, 1 Crescent, Salford M5 4PR

Unemployed Workers Charter, BCM 928, London, WC1 3XX

WORKFARE OVER THERE US WOMEN LOBBY SENATE

90% of welfare claimants in the United States are women. The US Senate recently introduced a bill to force women to 'work off' their benefits in low paid jobs and bogus training. This was aimed especially at single mothers.

In the face of media disinformation and apathy from the professional poverty lobby women campaigners achieved a significant concession - workfare is not universally mandatory, and various allowances will be paid.

WOMES FOR HOUSEWORK CAMPAIGN, King's Cross Women's Centre, 71 Tunbridge St, London, WC1 9DZ.

Cooked Figures

The Government is claiming that unemployment is now less than 2 million. THIS IS NONSENSE.

Since 1982, the Government has changed the method of counting unemployment 28 times.

According to the Unemployment Unit, the pre-1982 unemployment figure has only fallen below 3 million in the last few months.

If the various Government schemes are included - compulsory YTS (428,000), ET (106,000), Enterprise Allowance (93,000), Community Programme (88,000) - a very different picture emerges.

Furthermore, after last April's changes, 300,000 Income Support claimants simply vanished from the register - for reasons other than declining unemployment.

And what of the thousands of people who sign off under pressure from claimant advisers?

By combining these figures, there is clearly some doubt as to whether unemployment has fallen AT ALL.

But the Government's campaign continues. It is estimated that the new "Actively Seeking Work" rules could force AT LEAST 50,000 people off benefit in the first few months of operation.



The Government is using its own "phony" unemployment figures and so-called "efficiency" drive as an excuse to shed 20,000 jobs from UB and DSS offices.

This will mean a much worse service for claimants, especially as computerisation will mean that claims are processed in distant offices rather than locally. DSS's are inefficient and overworked enough already, but the nightmare of long distance computerised claims will make present delays look like fun. For example, Family Credit applications, which are ALL processed in Blackpool can take at least a month, often much longer.

DSS staff are energetically opposing the cuts. 21 offices in London scheduled for closure (their work to be moved to Belfast, Wigan, and Glasgow) are at present on strike. Staff activists are hoping for a one-day London wide strike, and a march and rally involving claimants groups.

"They're Trying to Steal our Homes"

That's what a council tenant in Reading said about the Housing Bill. Now the Bill has become law, and is meeting opposition all over the country.

* Tenants in designated Housing Action Trust areas have held demos attended by thousands of people, and are making links with other HAT areas.

* Hammersmith and Fulham Tenants Association are holding pre-emptive ballots BEFORE developers show any interest in an area. Results vary between 78% and a remarkable 98% OPPOSED to private takeovers.

* Gloucester Tenants Federation picketed the Tory City council meeting to demand equal funding to the money being spent by the council - £50,000 - in selling off 6,000 homes.

* Waltham Forest Tenants Association picketed the offices of the Nationwide Anglia Building Society - who plan to cash in on the great council housing sell-off.

* Council workers are refusing to co-operate with the Act.

Meanwhile, as council tenants get organised, what of private tenants

NO POLL TAX

In April, registration for the poll tax begins in England and Wales, while demands for payment will start arriving in Scotland. The Scottish campaign has set a fine example for people in England and Wales.

* 1/3 of all households in the Lothian region refused to return their registration forms.

* 1/4 of all households in Lothian, and 50,000 in Strathclyde were still refusing to register after the "final deadline."

* ONE MILLION SCOTS WON'T PAY - THAT'S MASS NON-PAYMENT.

In England and Wales, anti-poll tax campaigns are growing in many areas. Suggestions for action are many and varied.

The Alliance of Unwaged Organisations Congress last year suggested that people in private accommodation, and on council waiting lists should start organising. Even small groups of tenants with the same landlord could hold off the worst depredations of this new Act.

Shelter publish a guide to the Housing Act, by Les Burrows, price £3, from Shelter, 88 Old St, London.

* Mass door to door leafletting. Already, many thousands of houses are displaying NO POLL TAX stickers in their windows.

* Community Groups. Is there one in your area, your street ? Community groups can spread news, hints on delaying registration, and more importantly, build a sense of neighbourhood solidarity against this unjust tax. And, community groups will really come into their own when the non-payment struggles begin. No-one should face poll tax bills, fines, or bailiffs alone.

* Workplace groups. Know anyone that's got a job ? Ask them to start a workplace anti-poll tax group. In Scotland, groups of workers have pledged to come out on strike if any wages are docked by employers to pay unpaid poll tax bills.

Pressure on Councils. Lothian Regional Council meeting on 6 December last year was occupied by 25 members of the Lothian Anti Poll Tax Federation, demanding that Labour controlled Lothian 'STOP IMPLEMENTING THE POLL TAX, AND STOP FINING PEOPLE FOR REFUSING TO REGISTER.'

Dumbarton District Council have refused to register or collect the poll tax.

0975243680



Publicising Companies.

The following companies are heavily involved in the poll tax registration process - HONEYWELL BULL, MCDONALD DOUGLAS, and I.C.L.

BRITISH TELECOM with their Information Exchange system will run a computer tracking service to trace individuals movements from one county to another.

Delaying Registration.

Registration can't be avoided - poll tax officers have access to any number of files - DoSS, hospital records, council files, etc- but it can be delayed. By asking awkward questions and losing forms, no end of bureaucratic confusion can be created. Use your imagination.

Snooping the Snoopers.

After poll tax forms are posted out in late April, reminders in June/July, poll tax snoopers will start appearing in August. Take photographs of them, run ahead of them warning your neighbours etc.

For more information on the Poll Tax and what to do about it contact:-
COMMUNITY RESISTANCE TO THE POLL TAX, BOX CR, 11 FORTH ST, EDINBURGH.

WHAT?

Welcome to the first edition of **HASSLE** - the paper of the Alliance of Unwaged Organisations (AUO). The AUO is a federation of all and any unwaged groups, claimants unions, etc that want to communicate with each other to share ideas, information, experience, and to take practical steps towards organising in defence of claimants rights, locally and nationally.

This first edition has been put together by Norwich Claimants Union, by claimants, for claimants.

For information on your nearest unwaged group contact your regional contact below. For a claimants union starter pack, contact the Federation On Claimants Unions, c/o Rights Shop, 296 Bethnal Green Rd, London E2.

Its easy to start a local claimants union. Talk to your friends, get some leaflets printed and you're away. Or you could start by handing out this newsheet outside your dole office. If anyone wants single copies or hundreds to hand out write to Norwich C.U., address below.

Regional Contacts.

Lothian Claimants Union,
c/o EUWC, 2 Cranston St,
Edinburgh EH8
Tel 031 557 0718

Leeds Claimants Union,
158 Hyde Park Rd, Leeds,
LS6 1AG
Tel. 0532 753160

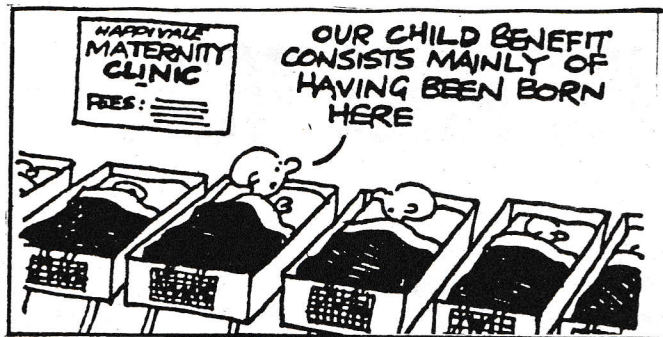
Coventry Unemployed
Action Group, Room 5,
Unit 15, Archa
Industrial Estate, Spon
End, Coventry

Mary Ward Unwaged
Group, Mary Ward Centre,
42 Queens Sq, London, WC1

Norwich Claimants
Union, St Ann's Cottage,
St Ann Lane, Norwich
Tel. 0603 661241

South West Unwaged
Federation, c/o
Tavistock Claimants Union
Kingdon House, Pym St,
Tavistock, Devon.

YOUR NEWS, COMMENTS, IDEAS, AND DONATIONS WILL ALL BE WHAT KEEPS THIS NEWSHEET GOING Send them all to Hassle, c/o Norwich Claimants Union, St Ann's Cottage, St Ann Lane, Norwich. Tel 0603 661241.



the great pension scandal

The recent storm over the means testing of pensions has indicated there is doubt about the Government's commitment to them.

Ironically, this year is the 80th anniversary of the introduction of pensions - the result of a very long struggle initiated by the National Pensions Committee (NPC).

The NPC fought for a non-contributory, non-means tested pension as a human right, not an act of charity.

Today, there are 10 million pensioners. Their income depends on when they retired and into which scheme they made contributions. In 1978, the State Earnings Related Pension (SERPS) replaced the previous inadequate schemes. Hence, the poorest pensioners are those over 75 who retired before SERPS was introduced.

But the Government is determined to undermine state pensions.

Lawson's claim that he was misreported by the Sunday newspapers is a bit weak in the light of other government statements in recent years. A leaked report indicated that pensions were being singled out for special attention and a Treasury Green Paper highlighted "demographic trends" suggesting pensions are becoming an increasing burden due to an aging population. But the official projected increase in the number of over 65's is only 1% a decade till 2040.

The Government's rundown of SERPS is motivated by ideology rather than demography, their main concern being to shift the burden of pensions from the public to the private sector. They are even offering £2,000 bribes to people who contract out of SERPS before April 1.

So, the 80th anniversary of the introduction of pensions finds the whole pensions scheme under attack, despite reassurances to the contrary. And, in a sense, the real scandal is that the original aim of a non-contributory, non-means tested pensions has never been nor is likely to be, reached.

review

WE REFUSE TO STARVE IN SILENCE by Richard Croucher.

The lack of awareness amongst unemployed people about the struggles and successes of the National Unemployed Workers Movement from the early 20's to the outbreak of World War 2 could be said to amount to historical conspiracy.

I read this book with something approaching amazement - amazement that such consistent activity has been so well hidden by those who control and mould our opinions. The NUWM's local and national activity is a fine example of practical support work and effective direct action. It is not exaggerating to say that unemployed activism in the 20's and 30's is in some considerable measure responsible for the creation of the social security system - which is so under attack at the moment.

An important part of the NUWM's success was in making unemployed people less willing to undermine the wages of those in work - by scabbing or accepting low paid work - thus making the obvious and vital links between employed and unemployed.

There are problems. Political differences inevitably caused divisions and confusions within and around the NUWM - both in policy and methods of organising. Also, there apparently were many local unemployed groups who for various reasons were never in the NUWM and whose history is little known.

To a certain extent this is beside the point. What is proved is that by being collectively organised unemployed people can make a vast difference to government policy. In the 70's and 80's mass unemployment has NOT caused a resurgence of unemployed activism on the same scale as 50 years ago. But now, with the screws being tightened almost every week the need becomes more and more obvious.

This book is no dry historical tract but a testimony to what CAN be done.

Lawrence & Wishart £6.95.